



# *The Nutshell*

JANUARY 2003  
VOLUME 17  
NUMBER 1

Newsletter of Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center

## In With the New and Forward, Ho!

**W**ith a new year comes new and, we hope, exciting changes and possibilities at Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center. First let me introduce myself, Craig Hensley, the new Interpretive Programs Supervisor (IPS) for Burr Oak Woods. Prior to joining the Missouri Department of Conservation in December, I served as the Director of Education and Master Naturalist for the Fontenelle Nature Association in Bellevue, Nebraska. The first time I applied for a job with the MDC was back in 1981 – it took 21 years, but I finally made it! I am very happy to be joining this wonderful facility with its dedicated and talented staff and volunteers.

Speaking to the future, we will continue striving to bring you excellent programs that provide hands-on and educational experiences for families, children and adults. If you have an interest in nature, we will deliver programs

that will nurture your need to learn more about and enjoy the natural world, continuing our popular programs as well as adding new ones.

In addition to programming, you will notice several changes to our newsletter, all for the best, we believe. We will continue to write a natural history article under Naturalist Notebook, keep you up-to-date with what's going on in the natural world with Natural Happenings, and you'll learn about one of our native wild animals or plants in Critter Corner.

We will also continue to be your source for natural history questions or problem-solving; just give us a call at 288-3766 and I or one of our naturalists will do our best to help you.

I hope you will make plans to join us this year, whether it is for a walk along our trails or to participate in one or more of our programs. And be sure to tell your friends about Burr Oak Woods, too. See you on the trails!  
Naturally,  
R. Craig Hensley, IPS

New for 2003!

### Into the Woods Book Club & Writer's Group

Winter is the perfect time of year to cuddle up in your favorite chair with a good book. Join us for a new, on-going program that will explore the natural world through literature. We'll begin with a conservation classic, *Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold. We'll meet to discuss and share over coffee or tea on Sunday, February 9 at 2 p.m. Please call for more information and to pick up a copy of the book from Naturalist Lisa LaCombe.

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Hear Ye!

Hear Ye!

### VOLUNTEERS WANTED!

Now is the time to make plans to join our volunteer program. If you enjoy learning about the nature center and sharing your love and knowledge of the outdoors with others, we invite you to attend our Volunteer Naturalist orientation meeting on Wednesday night, January 15 at 7 p.m. at Burr Oak Woods. We will review with you what our volunteers do for the center as well as outline the training and other requirements to become a Volunteer Naturalist. Call 228-3766 to register.

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### Fish, Film, and Feedings

The fish, turtles, and amphibians are fed Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday at 3 p.m. The snakes are fed every other Friday at 3:30 p.m.

**NEW!**

Films are shown Saturday and Sunday at 1:30 p.m.

January 4<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>: Amazing Caves

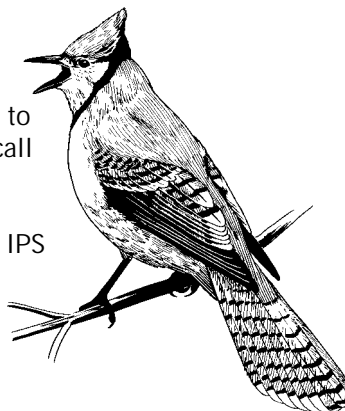
January 5<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>: Eagle Adventures

January 11<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>: Peek-a-boo Pals

January 12<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>: Panther Adventures

### Introducing Birding 101

We see birds year round yet many people can't tell the difference between a blue jay and a bluebird. Birding 101 is a new program that gives novice and casual birders the opportunity to learn more about the 140+ species of birds that call Burr Oak Woods home. From owls to warblers, you'll become skilled at identification and learn their natural history, as well. Make plans to join IPS Craig Hensley for this sure-to-be educational (and fun!) program. Please note that we will monthly through May and include periodic Saturday morning walks. Specific dates and times will be available at the first program session and in upcoming newsletters. This is an adults only (20 and up) program.  
Initial Meeting: Wednesday, January 22, 7:00-8:30 p.m.





## From the Treetops

The New Year seems to be a time when people make resolutions to start new things. This year, something's already started at Burr Oak Woods. The Department of Conservation, together with a generous donation from Mrs. Edna Bailey, just recently completed a new Wildlife Viewing Room!

This beautiful room addition, landscaping, and new feeders, all give you, the visitor, an up-front view of the wildlife that frequent the nature center. Songbirds, squirrels, chipmunks, raccoons, wild turkeys, and deer have all been seen by watchful eyes at the Wildlife Viewing Room. With the large glass windows, it is the perfect place to relax by yourself, with a friend, or family and enjoy nature, indoors. The flexible room will also be used for indoor programming, introducing visitors to the outdoors.

If it's been awhile since you've been to Burr Oak Woods, why not start the New Year out with a trip here. It's a resolution you won't mind keeping. Happy Trails!

— LYNN YOUNGBLOOD  
Nature Center Manager

## Critter Corner



by Stephanie Acers, Naturalist

While watching birds at Burr Oak Woods recently, I heard "peter, peter, peter," the unmistakable whistling of the tufted titmouse. Just then five titmice flew down from a nearby oak tree. One by one each bird would take a sunflower seed from a feeder and fly to a tree, breaking open the seed and eating the heart. They would then return, continuing this routine, all the while chatting noisily back and forth. What a fun sight!

Identifying a tufted titmouse is pretty easy. Cousins of the black-capped chickadee, titmice are small gray birds, measuring six inches long and wearing a distinctive crest, similar to that of a cardinal. They also have a black forehead and salmon-colored sides or flanks. Titmice are woodland inhabitants and range widely over most of the eastern United States. In Missouri, as elsewhere, titmice are permanent residents, being found at all times of the year.

If you have never seen a tufted titmouse before, here's your chance. Come out to Burr Oak Woods and watch for them at the feeders, where they eat black oil sunflower seeds, suet, nutmeats and peanuts. Or make plans to join us for one of our morning bird walks in search of these and our other feathered friends.



## - Naturalist Notebook -

### Surviving Winter's Grip

by R. Craig Hensley, IPS

Have you ever wondered how a black-capped chickadee or mourning cloak butterfly survives the cold of winter? And, what happens to frogs, toads, snakes and other cold-blooded critters? Not surprisingly, each species has developed strategies and adaptations that help them survive this harshest of seasons.

At the most fundamental level, animals have a choice as winter approaches: to stay active, hibernate, or migrate. Many animals, including white-tailed deer, cottontail rabbits, northern cardinals and black-capped chickadees survive winter by remaining active. To do so, however, requires behavioral and physical adaptations.

Squirrels, blue jays and some woodpeckers gather and store or "cache" food for later use. Deer and rabbits shift from tree leaves, grasses and forbs to a diet of twigs and bark. Chickadees, titmice, and woodpeckers eat a higher percentage of seeds due to lack of readily available insects.

Hibernators, such as the woodchuck, spend their fall eating . . . and eating . . . and eating, putting on fat that will be used to get them through the winter. Hibernators also reduce their metabolic, breathing, and heart rates, as well as lowering their body temperature. These steps help conserve energy. Insects, reptiles and amphibians also over-winter in various states of hibernation, under leaves, buried in soil or the mud of ponds. A few produce chemicals that essentially allow them to freeze without dying. Imagine finding a frog-cicle!

Migration results from food shortages that naturally occur with the onset of winter. For those animals that must stay active, migrating to warmer areas where food is available is their only, albeit dangerous, option. We are all familiar with the migrations of birds, but they are not the only long-distance travelers. Monarch butterflies and green darner dragonflies, among other insects, also migrate. Even earthworms and moles make a migration of sorts, heading deeper into the ground, escaping the frost line.

Animals have indeed found many different ways to survive the cold and snow of winter. During this cold month, we hope you'll not hibernate too much, but instead make your own migration to Burr Oak Woods and join us in a variety of active natural history programs, for a bird walk, or just to head out on the trails for fresh air and exercise. In the meantime, stay warm!

## - NATURAL HAPPENINGS -

- Look for "snowbirds" or dark-eyed juncos on the ground near your bird feeders. These winter visitors from the north have grey heads, chests and backs, a white belly and white outer tail feathers.

- After a fresh snow, head out to the nature center in search of fresh animal tracks. Can you find those of wild turkey, white-tailed deer and gray squirrels? Try and figure out what they may have been doing or where they were headed.

- Watch for mourning cloak and comma butterflies fluttering around on the sunny, warm days during the typical January thaw.

- Red-tailed hawks are abundant, perched along roadsides and at woodland edges. Keep in mind, however, that not all of them have red tails. Birds born during the last year have a banded tail. Can you tell which is which?

# JANUARY EVENTS AT BURR OAK WOODS

Call Burr Oak Woods Nature Center on or after January 1 to register for free programs. (Phone 228-3766 V/TDD). If you have to cancel, please call as soon as possible so someone on the waiting list can attend.

**3** Fridays

## **17** Winter Bird Walk

**31** Grab your binoculars, field guide and join Naturalist Stephanie Acers for a walk in search of our winter birds. Binoculars will be available if needed. No registration is required.

Time: 8:00 - 9:30 a.m.

Ages: Adults (20 & up)

**4** Saturday

## **Burr Oak Creek Stream**

### **Families: Stream Day!**

Join the Burr Oak Creek Stream Team for a brisk January litter pick-up day. We'll return to the nature center following our efforts for a mug of cocoa by the fire. Be sure to dress for the weather. Please call to register.

Time: 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Ages: Families

**5** Sunday

## **Drawing Nature 101**

Drawing is a perfect way to study nature more closely. Join Naturalist Lisa LaCombe as she teaches you how to draw natural objects with emphasis on light and form. Bring a sketchbook and please call to register.

Time: 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Ages: Adult (20 and up)

**7** Tuesday

## **Conservation Kid's Club:**

### **Winter Survival Trivial Pursuit**

Your child is invited to join Naturalist Lisa LaCombe to discover what it takes for wild animals to survive the cold and snow of winter. We'll play exciting games, all with a new natural twist! Please call to register.

Time: 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Ages: 7- 10 years old

**10** Fridays

## **24** Winter Bird Walk

Grab your binoculars, field guide and join Naturalist Stephanie Acers for a walk in search of our winter birds. No experience necessary. Binoculars will be provided if needed. No registration is required.

Time: 8:00 - 9:30 a.m.

Ages: All ages welcome

**10** Friday

## **Prowlin' for Owls**

Join us for a nocturnal wander in search of those denizens of the dark. You'll learn about their natural history and then head outdoors in search of the winged predators. Be sure to dress warmly! Please call to register.

Time: 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Ages: Adult (20 and up)

**18** Saturday, Tuesday, Wednesday

## **21** Little Acorns: Off to Sleep

### **22** You Go, Teddy Bear

Is your child's teddy bear tucked in for winter? If not, bring your child and his/her favorite little bear and a paper grocery bag and we'll help him get his winter's nap, just like the real ones do! We'll sing a song, make a special take-home craft and even take a short hike (weather permitting) to look for places where other animals sleep during winter. Please call to register.

Times: 10:30 - 11:45 a.m. or

1:00 - 2:45 p.m.

Ages: 3 - 6 years

**12** Sunday

## **Dr. Nutcase is in the House!**

The good doctor is in and once again experimenting with the natural world! This month we're trying to figure out just what is the best "stuff" for keeping warm. Is it feathers, fur, blubber or what? Join us for exciting discoveries. Please call to register.

Time: 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Ages: 7 and up

**15** Wednesday

## **Homeschool: Outstanding Adaptations**

Just how do all those animals survive winter? We'll explore the wintery world of animals, including their adaptations that make survival possible. We'll wrap up our morning with a hike to see who's out and about so dress warmly! Please call to register.

Time: 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Ages: 3 to 6 and 7 & up)

**18** Saturday

## **Winter Bird Walk**

We're off again in search of winter birds. Dress warmly, bring binoculars and a field guide, and join Naturalist Diane Neal for a walk in search of our winter birds. Binoculars will be available. No registration is required.

Time: 8:00 - 9:30 a.m.

Ages: All ages welcome

**18** Saturday

## **Outdoor Adventures:**

### **Wilderness Shelter Building**

With winter upon us, would you know how to survive if you were stranded on a cold night? Naturalist Diane Neal will share shelter building techniques and other helpful hints that could save you in an emergency

Time: 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Ages: 12 and up

**21** Tuesday

## **Birding 101**

See complete description on front page.

**2** Sunday

## **Dr. Nutcase is in the House!**

We are on a decomposition mission. How do things decompose in nature? Who is nature's trash man? Bring three two-liter pop bottles. Be sure to register in February!

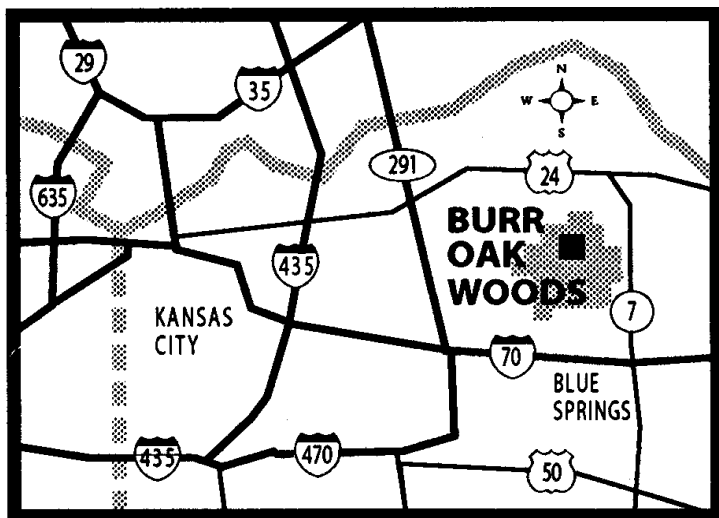
Time: 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Ages: 7 and up

## **Restoration Project Day**

**Saturday, January 25, 8:00 a.m. - Noon**

It's that time of the year for our annual clean up and on-going efforts to improve the habitats of Burr Oak Woods. Bring your family and friends, and join Burr Oak staff and volunteers as we continue our efforts to enhance native plant and animal communities. This is a great community project for Scout, church groups, and other civic organizations. After all of our hard work, we'll come inside the nature center to warm up and enjoy a warm lunch and camaraderie. You'll be able to come back for seasons to come and see the effects of your hard work. Call to make reservations for you or your group. Please be sure to dress for the weather and for getting dirty, too! Ages: 8 and up.



**B**URR OAK WOODS CONSERVATION NATURE CENTER is located one mile north of I-70 on Hwy 7, one mile west on Park Road. The Nature Center is open Monday through Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and noon to 5 p.m. on Sundays. AREA HOURS: The area and trails are open 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. No pets allowed. There is no admission fee. Gift Shop closes at 4:30 p.m.

LEARN MORE ABOUT BURR OAK WOODS BY VISITING OUR WEBSITE AT:

[www.BurrOakWoods.org](http://www.BurrOakWoods.org)



**The Nutshell**

BURR OAK WOODS CONSERVATION NATURE CENTER  
MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION  
1401 NW PARK ROAD – BLUE SPRINGS, MO 64015

## GIFT SHOP NEWS!

The shelves are stocked with all kinds of great nature-related items. From natural history books on a wide variety of Missouri plants and animals to a variety of children-friendly items, you are sure to find something to further enhance your enjoyment of the natural world. And, it's not too late to pick up a copy of the popular Missouri Department of Conservation's Natural Events Calendar for 2003.

### Congratulations Volunteers!

2002

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR  
MARVIN ROBERTS

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR  
CAROL BARCLAY

MOST DEPENDABLE - MAYTAG  
FRANCES MATHEWS

MOST FLEXIBLE - GUMBY  
JUDY OETTING

BEHIND THE SCENES - PHANTOM  
DONNA SOPER

**BE A VOLUNTEER!**  
Orientation meeting is  
January 15, at 7:00 p.m.!

### - STAFF -

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LYNN YOUNGBLOOD

INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS SUPERVISOR  
CRAIG HENSLEY

NATURALISTS  
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